

**To:** Card, Joan[Card.Joan@epa.gov]  
**Cc:** Grantham, Nancy[Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov]; Wall, Tom[Wall.Tom@epa.gov]; Jenkins, Laura Flynn[Jenkins.Laura@epa.gov]; Deitz, Randy[Deitz.Randy@epa.gov]; Loop, Travis[Loop.Travis@epa.gov]; Schollhamer, Mary[Schollhamer.Mary@epa.gov]; Belle, Kara[Belle.Kara@epa.gov]; Wells, Suzanne[Wells.Suzanne@epa.gov]  
**From:** StClair, Christie  
**Sent:** Wed 4/13/2016 6:54:01 PM  
**Subject:** RE: OW, RANDY, R8 ACTION - Daily Caller (DDL COB today): GKM water quality

Thanks, everybody, for your help. Below is the final I'll send.

**1. I understand that part of the monitoring plan at the Animas River involves monitoring contaminant levels during storms events. Does this monitoring also include the San Juan River?**

Yes. All monitoring sites are listed in the final plan, which is on the Gold King Mine response site. Here is the document's url: [https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-03/documents/post-gkm-final-conceptual-monitoring-plan\\_2016\\_03\\_24\\_16.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-03/documents/post-gkm-final-conceptual-monitoring-plan_2016_03_24_16.pdf)

You'll find the sites listed on pages 13-15.

**2. Does the EPA have a plan to protect human and wildlife health if that monitoring shows spiked contaminant levels during storm events?**

Historically, the Animas River has an elevated "normal" (pre-event) level of metals independent of the Gold King Mine release, due to the constant supply of acid mine drainage into the river from many sources.

Acid mine drainage has been released into the rivers for many decades and winter runoff and major storms may kick up material that had settled to the bottom of the rivers. So those using the river for recreation, agriculture or drinking water should use the same precautions they always have.

The EPA is currently working with state, local and tribal stakeholders to address long-term solutions, including recently proposing the Bonita Peak Mining District to the National Priorities List (NPL).

There may be occasions when the metal concentrations fluctuate from time to time because of water surges due to heavy rains or other events that may change the water flow rates or volume, but this should not diminish the fact that the river system as a whole is being maintained at pre-event conditions. We have released a monitoring plan to determine any longer term impacts and are currently working with local and state stakeholders to implement those efforts.

Here is some additional background on the region you may find useful.

EPA and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) conducted a Superfund Site Assessment of the area in the 1990s. The assessment showed that water quality standards were not achieved in the Animas River near Silverton and identified the severe impacts to aquatic life in the Upper Animas and its tributaries from naturally occurring and mining-related heavy metals. In recognition of the community-based collaborative effort, EPA agreed to postpone adding all or a portion of the site to the Superfund NPL, as long as progress was being made to improve the water quality of the Animas River. Until approximately 2005, water quality in the Animas River was improving. However, since 2005, water quality in the Animas River has not improved and, for at least 20 miles below the confluence with Cement Creek and the water quality has declined significantly. Impacts to aquatic life were also demonstrated by fish population surveys conducted by Colorado Parks and Wildlife, which found no fish in the Animas River below Cement Creek for approximately two miles and observed precipitous declines in fish populations as far as 20 miles downstream since 2005. Because of this declining water quality in the Animas River, in 2008, EPA's Superfund Site Assessment program began investigations in Upper Cement Creek focused on evaluating whether the Upper Cement Creek area alone would qualify for inclusion on the NPL. This evaluation indicated that the area would qualify, although after receiving additional community input, EPA postponed efforts to include the area on the National Priorities List. Since that time, EPA has continued and broadened its investigations of conditions at the site in order to understand the major sources of heavy metal contamination in the Upper Animas. SITE RISK: Mining operations have greatly disturbed the land, adding to existing highly mineralized conditions in many areas of the site. Mineralized waste rock exposed to air and water causes acidic conditions to mobilize the release of heavy metals to the surrounding environment. These heavy metals have found their way into the Animas River and its tributaries and have eventually traveled farther downstream.

**3. How long will it take to complete cleaning at the Bonita Pike Mining District and how much will it cost? Additionally, what are the time and cost estimates to finish cleaning just Gold King Mine and the Animas River?**

Prior to completing an RI/FS, EPA will not know what the site's cleanup scope will be, and, therefore, we can't estimate how long cleanup actions will take. At all sites, the length of time to complete all remediation work depends on a number of site specific factors. For example, it's hard to predict what year the remedial investigation and feasibility study will be done, how many other sites will be in the queue for funding that year, and whether there will be one or more PRPs helping pay for the cleanup. We also don't know yet what the exact problems are, and what the remedies should be --- that information, which will be included in the remediation proposal, will ultimately determine project cost and timeline.

Christie St. Clair

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**From:** Card, Joan

**Sent:** Wednesday, April 13, 2016 2:50 PM

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**Subject:** Re: OW, RANDY, R8 ACTION - Daily Caller (DDL COB today): GKM water quality

Having heard no other input from LT, ok.

Joan Card

Senior Policy Advisor

Region 8

Sent from my EPA iPhone

On Apr 13, 2016, at 1:45 PM, StClair, Christie <[StClair.Christie@epa.gov](mailto:StClair.Christie@epa.gov)> wrote:

Joan, does R8 concur with the version below?

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**Subject:** Re: OW, RANDY, R8 ACTION - Daily Caller (DDL COB today): GKM water quality

## Deliberative Process/Ex. 5

Thanks ng

**From:** Wall, Tom  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 13, 2016 2:31 PM  
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## Deliberative Process/Ex. 5

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Christie:

## Deliberative Process/Ex. 5

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**Subject:** OW, RANDY, R8 ACTION - Daily Caller (DDL COB today): GKM water quality

Ethan Barton is looking for our response on this by end of today. We've addressed most of this previously, so I'm just looking for OW, OLEM IO, and R8 approval before sending.

1. I understand that part of the monitoring plan at the Animas River involves monitoring contaminant levels during storms events. Does this monitoring also include the San Juan River?

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